

# atmos *weather as media*

curated by Janine Randerson

opening 6pm Friday 17 October 2008

17 October 15 November 2008



Janine Randerson  
Andrea Polli  
SONIC ANTARCTICA (2008)  
video CD, video projection

## Atmos: weather as media JANINE RANDERSON Curator

*Atmos: weather as media* is an exhibition of air, sun, clouds and storms. In Ancient Greece the word *atmos* meant 'breath' or 'vapour': it applied equally to both the human and the planetary realms. Today, *atmos* sometimes refers to the vaporous mist dissolving the visible background of a scene in cinema special effects, or to the background ambient noise that fills out a dialogue track in sound engineering. But periodically the atmosphere moves to the foreground – in the form of cataclysmic storms or droughts. And, within the persistent hum of *atmos*, we are now also hearing the increasingly clear message of a shifting climate.

The exhibition presents a selection of international and New Zealand artists who incorporate aspects of the weather directly into their practices, drawing attention to the agency of unpredictable natural phenomena. These are artists working at the borders of science, technology and ecology: some use weather in their art-making process, some simulate atmospheres, while others approach weather allegorically. At a time of ecological stress, their mediations in weather become ciphers for dialogue, critique and transformation.

As they monitor the atmosphere, the meteorological instruments become non-human protagonists in an epic struggle. In one sequence a wireless camera transmits video while attached to a weather balloon. The viewer experiences the position of a remote observer, hanging precariously over the snow as the wireless connection flickers uncertainly. While the image falters, the audio data streams warble, chime, pulsate, and eventually overpower the scientists' voices – the atmospheric hum eluding science's best efforts at interpretation.

Janine Randerson is an artist and a PhD researcher at the University of Melbourne. She is on the editorial committee for the Leonardo/OLATS 'Lovely Weather: Art and Climate' project.

As they map out connections between art, weather, science and temporality, these artists provoke us to ask questions such as: How does weather mark time? How does the atmosphere get condensed or expanded in digital space?

If the Impressionists sought to 'fix' the fleeting effects of weather visually through painting, in the post-war period artists sought instead to yield to the contingent, 'live', real-time immediacy of everyday phenomena. The 1960s and 1970s were a time when 'liveness' had multiple modes in art outside the institution, and the artists in *atmos* share an interest in the aleatory weather event with several important artists of this period. There is, for example, a live, experiential quality to coexisting with the wind and weather when viewing kinetic sculpture such as Len Lye's *Wind Wands* (1960). Walter De Maria's *The Lightning Field* (1971-77) is activated by the arrival of a storm. Hans Haacke referred to his freezing ice and condensing vapour works in the 1960s as 'real-time systems' and Yoko Ono uses real-time video of the mutable sky in *Skytv* (1966) – the latter anticipating the live-streaming digital data used by artists

Corby and Bailly.

Michael Dieter  
Tom Corby and  
Gavin Bailly  
CYCLONE.SOC (2006)  
interactive, networked installation

Tom Corby and Gavin Bailly's emerging subset of software analysis that combines graphic design and digital cartography create visually dynamic tools capable of dealing with the complex, multi-layered information visualisation of an important management tool in today's societies, and routinely used in predicting weather patterns across a diverse range of fields including biology, meteorology, and politics. High resolution data is tightly packed into a grid format, one that allows for a break-down of the data into smaller units. Corby and Bailly's work is a high resolution, multi-layered, and multi-dimensional visualization of the weather, which is then measured and arranged graphically through a multi-layered process. The resulting domain produced is neither strictly political nor cultural, but opens onto a new dimension of aesthetics – one that structures and constrains the virtuality of the social. Information visualisation is oriented towards the constitution of actual worlds; despite harnessing natural processes that never a neutral operation. But its activities inform, double and produce sociality they also allow for emergent possibilities of creativity and innovation.

As an example of software art, CYCLONE.SOC works in this regard to combine text-based exchange from Internet newsgroups with atmospheric data measured via satellite in one suggestive visual assemblage. It relates the social establishes – for instance, between social tensions in online religious debates and extreme weather events – allude to the manner in which belief-systems can discursively load the material world with particular meanings. CYCLONE.SOC explores the interwoven quality of language, ecology, and reveals how the ways we discuss and understand nature can collectively shape or transform the environment around us.

The satellite data used in Storm is courtesy of The Japanese Meteorological Association (JMA) and the Australian Bureau of Meteorology (BoM).

Michael Dieter is a sessional lecturer and PhD researcher at the University of Melbourne. He is currently completing a thesis on distributed aesthetics, political philosophy and new media art.

Danny Butt lectures in Critical Studies at Elam School of Fine Arts and is an editor of the book PLACE: Local Knowledge and New Media Practice (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008).

While artists were gathering up the weather in the 1960s, the science of stable matter was giving way to the flux of quantum science. Meteorologist Edward Lorenz's numerical experiments revealed that small disparities in the initial conditions of his weather simulations led to major differences in outcomes. The problem of predicting the weather system mathematically had far-reaching implications for the development of a new science, later called 'chaos' science. Twenty-first century developments in computing allow for ever more complex simulations of the biosphere.

Several artworks in *atmos* trace a picture of the world as a complex interplay between informational and material patterns; an interplay which emerges from a space between science and art. In this space,

where weather becomes art media, the exploration of productive disorder as norm rather than aberration offers us alternative ways of relating to contemporary reality. It allows permanence in art objects to be exchanged for fluid dynamics, and stasis in institutional and cultural politics to be exchanged for perpetual transformation.

The weather creates its own dynamic pictures, sounds and sensations, which we react to consciously or unconsciously all the time.

It suggests that 'many people would like to see interesting clouds, but lack the spare time in which to look upwards'.

Danny Butt lectures in Critical Studies at Elam School of Fine Arts and is an editor of the book PLACE: Local Knowledge and New Media Practice (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008).

These artists embrace the dissipation and excess of environmental matter, but also the periods of stillness or waiting time that necessarily occur within a dynamic system.

When artists use weather as media in their artwork they connect to a long history of human engagement with the weather as a beautiful, frustrating, sometimes frightening spectacle. The vapour produced by the respiration of the planet forms clouds, storms and also creative approaches.

By using weather as media for art production the artists in *atmos* suggest that the contingent nature of atmospheric conditions enables new sensory possibilities. Their many weathers may signal disorder – but it is a liberating and productive disorder.

Janine Randerson  
Hoon Li  
ESCAPE VELOCITY I AND ESCAPE VELOCITY II (2008)  
light boxes

How much can we manipulate the weather? This seems to be the question asked by Korean-born New Zealand artist Hoon Li as he subjects the mutable clouds to further shaping in digital space. *Escape Velocity* is liable to induce a double take: could these be real clouds – or have they been altered to become more beautiful, more panoramic than nature? The atmosphere is always mediated by the senses but Li's digital manipulations amplify and accentuate this process.

In *A Theory of Clouds: Toward a History of Painting* (2007) Hubert Damis examines the function of the cloud in Western and Eastern painting, reading the cloud as not only a spatial signifier but also a sign that cannot be separated from its formal, psychological and spiritual associations. Li's long, horizontal light boxes suggest heavenly cloudscapes combining several narratives from Korean and Japanese cloud painting. The hazy proliferation of cloud dissolves the image into a grid of pixels. Li's image is anchored by the tip of a weather vane. Clouds have an ethereal quality, but Li's cloudscape remains under the control of the artist's hand. The work consists of almost cryogenic weather and the same time as the weather at the same time as the weather at planetary scale. I see the weather as a metaphor for everything that is not under our control. I see the weather as a metaphor for everything that is not under our control. I see the weather as a metaphor for everything that is not under our control.

Weather enfolds the environment that we inhabit, inviting response: the tactile sense is activated by a light breeze; subtle shifts in temperature are registered by the skin; the sound of thunder or rain soothes or threatens; weather produces the scent of a new season in the air and vision registers the colours generated by the sun's light.

Julien Knebusch is a tutor and PhD researcher at University Paris III Sorbonne Nouvelle. He is the Leonardo/OLATS project manager for the 'Lovely Weather: Art and Climate' project. He is the twin brother of artist Jérôme Knebusch (France/Germany).

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Julien Knebusch & Jérôme Knebusch  
Jérôme Knebusch, 20  
SAVED & LOST (2008)  
mixed media, newspapers

Julien Knebusch *Why did you collect weather reports from Le Monde?* Jérôme Knebusch I liked the idea of placing myself in the position of a weather forecast recorder. Recording the recorded. But collecting something not really 'collectible', like the weather, is quite an absurd action. A collector likes differences between the similar. But weather is not similar, it changes constantly. So what can the forecast really tell? It is not the weather how it was, but the way we thought it would be the tomorrow of yesterday. Some countries don't appear on the Le Monde map the representation is typically Western European – and there are a lot of other discrepancies in the collection. Some maps are black and white, some outlines are missing, colours are inverted, and German is written at least in two different ways. A *Le Monde* from the Monday edition of 1998.

Like David Medalla's cloud-shape producing foam machines in the 1960s, Robbins' drawing machine produces a series of wind currents and atmospheric pressure lines to produce an abstract, organic form. Robbins has seen this drawing machine in the collection of Melbourne's Docklands to a jetty in Port Phillip Bay's mouth at the end of the 19th century. In the wind drawing the atmospheric lines informational and eyes trace the drawings. Robbins has seen this drawing machine in the collection of Melbourne's Docklands to a jetty in Port Phillip Bay's mouth at the end of the 19th century. In the wind drawing the atmospheric lines informational and eyes trace the drawings. Robbins has seen this drawing machine in the collection of Melbourne's Docklands to a jetty in Port Phillip Bay's mouth at the end of the 19th century. In the wind drawing the atmospheric lines informational and eyes trace the drawings.

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Janine Randerson  
Cameron Robbins  
SW COOL CHANGE – HOT, 95HRS, DOCKLANDS (2008) and 12-14/03/08, 40° – COOL CHANGE, 50HRS, DOCKLANDS (2008)  
ink drawings on paper

Australian artist Cameron Robbins' ongoing wind drawing series offers traces of the wind's presence using a DIY-style Portable Wind Powered Drawing Machine. His mechanism includes a tripod-mounted wind-vane, an anemometer, bearings, drive belts and pulley wheels, guides, drawing wires, an ink pen and a drawing board. The works are literal facsimiles of the fluctuating movements of the wind. In physics terms they visualise the phase space of wind as it moves between x and y coordinates: wind speed drives the drawing arm and wind direction orientates the drawing board, hence the pen is compelled to draw rapidly in the direction the wind blows. In the case of Melbourne, prevailing South-Easterly blows strongly and will then suddenly cease, leaving a dark strip of repeated marks signifying that a 'cool change' is imminent.

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Cassandra Barnett  
Lisa Benson  
FADE (2008)  
Antique black and white photographic paper, and gathered light from artist's studio in Hamilton (2003-2008) and MIC Gallery (for the duration of 'atmos')

Last night before bed I read Lola the story of The Three Silly's. Today her eyes are all big and curious and she keeps quizzing me on the part about the moon, which goes like this: Then the gentleman went on his travels again; and he came to a village, and outside the village there was a pond, and round the pond was a crowd of people. And they had got rakes, and brooms, and pitchforks reaching into the pond; and the gentleman asked what was the matter. 'Why,' they say, 'matter enough! Moon's tumbled into the pond, and we can't rake her out anyhow!' So the gentleman burst out laughing, and told them to look up into the sky, and that it was only the shadow in the water. But they wouldn't listen to him, and abused him shamefully, and he got away as quick as he could.

But what if they could catch it? Lola wants to know. How would they put it back? Would they hang it from a tree? Would they put it on a stick? Would they take turns holding it up? Would it burn their hands? Good question I think, wondering what *leucus* would have to say about it. But Lola hasn't finished. Would they ever be able to throw it hard enough to get it back in the sky? How fragile is the moon anyway? Why not let it swim in the pond? Maybe one day I'll tell Lola about Pierre and Niépce, the pioneers of photography. It wasn't enough, they explained, that they had learned to make shadow images of our world. They needed to lift them out of time, pin them down with fixer, and take permanent possession of the light's work. So fascinated were they with capturing what the light had done, they skated right over the living joy of actually seeing it take place. I wonder what Lola will make of them.

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**Andrea Polli**  
SONIC ANTARCTICA (2008)  
*audio CD, video projections*

How can we detect the 'signals' of climate change amidst the 'noise' of the atmosphere? Using digital weather instruments, advanced computers and numerical climate prediction models, scientists are just beginning to trace out patterns within vast arrays of complex data that conclusively prove the climate is changing. New York-based media artist Andrea Polli transforms such aggregates of data into audio form via a process of data 'sonification'. Her intervention in data visualization processes delivers the material of climate science to the senses.

Polli's current concern is with the rapid and irreversible change facing Antarctica, where she undertook a residency in January 2008. The resulting work, *Sonic Antarctica*, features a series of audio tracks accompanied by video footage. The sound samples for the piece were derived from the diverse mechanics of monitoring the weather: helicopters, radio waves, footsteps crunching over a glacier, electronic translations of weather and ice acceleration data. The work recalls New Zealand artist Philip Dadson's *Flutter* (2004), also made in Antarctica, which traced the sound rhythms of the wind battering a flag in the ice. However, Polli combines multiple systems of aural representation, from the abstract clicks and pulses of statistical information to the raw vocal recordings of scientists. As the scientists describe their interactions with pressure sensors, anemometers and tropospheric ozone detectors, Polli simultaneously transforms these scientific tools into musical instruments. Polli's own voice is also featured, suggesting that even her transitory presence there is altering the Antarctic space.

As they monitor the atmosphere, the meteorological instruments become non-human protagonists in an epic struggle. In one sequence a wireless camera transmits video while attached to a weather balloon. The viewer experiences the position of a remote observer, hanging precariously over the snow as the wireless connection flickers uncertainly. While the image falters, the audio data streams warble, chime, pulsate, and eventually overpower the scientists' voices – the atmospheric hum eluding science's best efforts at interpretation.

*Andrea Polli is a digital media artist living in New York City. Her work addresses issues relating to science and technology in contemporary society.*

*Janine Randerson*  
**Janine Randerson**  
STORMCHASERS (2008)  
*video, sound, custom-made perspex screens*  
**Jason Johnston** *sound composition*  
**Mike Wilmott** *satellite data extraction*

The collection of storm data by satellite meteorologists is statistical and controlled, while the tactics of the storm-chaser are opportunistic and experiential – a vertiginous race for immersion in the atmosphere. Since the advent of YouTube, personal video records of storms and storm-chasing (typically involving a car speeding along beside a storm with a camera thrust out of the window) have been made publicly accessible on the internet. Certain subgeneric conventions emerge when comparing online storm-chasing videos. For instance, storm-chasers often use public images of remote-sensed weather maps as an introduction to their reality-TV style pursuit of hurricanes, tornadoes or cyclones. And some weather enthusiasts use specialised equipment – such as the *Strike Alert Personal Lightning Detector* (2007), which uses electrical interference created by lightning and an LED warning device – to generate instant alerts if thunder and lightning is nearby.

Stormchasers, the installation, features hemispherical vignettes of storm-chasing videos that have been uploaded to YouTube from New Zealand and Australia. The definition of the storm-chase is broad here, but whether the footage depicts a violent storm filmed from the bedroom window or a madcap dash across the desert, it is always accompanied by a soundtrack of awe and excitement. Stormchasers also features animated imagery of visible light, water vapour and infrared satellite weather maps derived from the Japanese satellite MET-Sat2. These graphics chronicle a temporally condensed version of the week in April 2008 when Cyclone Nargis crossed the Asia-Pacific region.

Storm-chases create a visual spectacle, but they are also a sign of the times. The havoc and displacement created by tropical and subtropical storms have a profound effect on human and non-human ecologies. Increasingly intense cyclones may become a permanent fixture in both New Zealand and the wider Pacific – a phenomenon that will no doubt continue to be followed by scientists via remote-sensed data, and by storm-chasers on the ground.

*Janine Randerson is an artist and a PhD researcher at the University of Melbourne. She is on the editorial committee for the Leonardo/OLATS*  
*Lovely Weather: Art and Climate project.*

*Michael Dieter*  
**Tom Corby and Gavin Baily**  
CYCLONE.SOC (2006)  
*interactive, networked installation*

Tom Corby and Gavin Baily work in the field of information visualization, an emerging subset of software analysis that combines graphic design and digital cartography to create visualisation tools capable of dealing with enormous sets of complex data. Information visualisation offers an important management tool for today's network societies, and is routinely used for predicting trends and patterns across a diverse range of fields, from modeling biological formations to devising government policy.

Such selection, filtering and statistical analysis of data is a highly political activity, but at least one that implies a break with traditional forms of representation. As Corby and Baily observe, this mode of visuality is less concerned with simply indexing an image to an external referent than with abstracting an entire environment, which is then measured and arranged graphically through a multi-layered process. The resulting domain produced is neither strictly physical nor cultural, but opens onto a new dimension of aesthetics – one that structures and constrains the virtuality of the social. Information visualisation is oriented toward the constitution of actual worlds; despite harnessing natural processes this is never a neutral operation. But while its activities inform, double and even produce sociality they also allow for emergent possibilities of creativity and innovation.

As an example of software art, CYCLONE.SOC works in this register to combine text-based exchanges from Internet newsgroups with atmospheric data measured via satellite in one suggestive visual assemblage. The relations the work establishes – for instance, between social tensions in online religious debates and extreme weather events – allude to the manner in which belief-systems can discursively load the material world with particular meanings. Cyclone.SOC explores this interwoven quality of language and ecology, and reveals how the ways we discuss and understand nature can collectively shape or transform the environment around us.

*The satellite data used in Stormchasers is courtesy of The Japanese Meteorological Association (JMA) and the Australian Bureau of Meteorology (BOM).*

*uk-based artists Tom Corby and Gavin Baily have collaborated for over ten years on the production of experimental artworks using software-based visualisation and the data traces of social and environmental ecologies.*

*Michael Dieter is a sessional lecturer and PhD researcher at the University of Melbourne. He is currently completing a thesis on distributed aesthetics, political philosophy and new media art.*

*Danny Butt*  
**Douglas Bagnall,**  
CLOUD SHAPE CLASSIFIER (2006)  
*interactive, networked installation*

Wellington-based artist Douglas Bagnall's interactive work CLOUD SHAPE CLASSIFIER asks whether one of our most sublime 'natural' experiences, the aesthetic appreciation of clouds, can be systematised and automated. Demonstrating a genuine enthusiasm for the technological capabilities of computer technology, while humorously alluding to its limitations in engaging with human culture, Bagnall asks a simple yet powerful question: Can technology assist not only our production of art, but also our appreciation of it? The Cloud Shape Classifier consists of a computer and a digital camera, the latter being tilted skyward in Wellington. Every few seconds, an image of the sky is captured; analysed and classified according to shape, texture and colour; and saved to a database. The images are uploaded to a website and projected in the gallery via a computer with a broadband connection. Visitors to the exhibition see a selection of four cloud pictures in a grid format – by pressing one of the buttons accompanying each of the images, they tell the computer that they prefer that picture. The computer's algorithm learns from the user interaction, and shows clouds that it thinks people will like.

The CLOUD SHAPE CLASSIFIER perhaps contains a critique of our preference for aesthetic products over the process of looking at the natural environment. There is a sociological dimension to this work, reminiscent of the data-driven pop conceptualism of Komar and Melamid's Most Wanted series, in which the Russian conceptual artists conducted large-scale surveys of people's aesthetic preferences and painted 'averages' of the results. We not only become intrigued with the Classifier's choice of clouds, but have also to consider how our own training of the Classifier differs from other people's. With all its data, does the Classifier really know more about our preferences than we do? On the other hand, our awe at the scale of the cloud archive seems to displace our experience of the sublime sky, making our understanding of even a single cloud image feel somehow inauthentic, if still beautiful.

Bagnall's commentary on the project website characteristically dodges such philosophical concerns, returning with sardonic wit to the functionalist language of technological development. He suggests that 'many people would like to see interesting clouds, but lack the spare time in which to look upwards'.

*New Zealander Douglas Bagnall is a digital media artist and programmer. His work has been widely exhibited in festivals of Electronic Art.*

**Danny Butt** lectures in Critical Studies at Elam School of Fine Arts and is an editor of the book PLACE: Local Knowledge and New Media Practice (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008).

*Janine Randerson*  
**Hoon Li**  
ESCAPE VELOCITY I AND ESCAPE VELOCITY II (2008)  
*duratrans print mounted on light boxes*

How much can we manipulate the weather? This seems to be the question asked by Korean-born New Zealand artist Hoon Li as he subjects the mutable clouds to further shaping in digital space. Escape Velocity is liable to induce a double take: could these be real cloudscape – or have they been altered to become more beautiful, more panoramic than nature? The atmosphere is always mediated by the senses but Li's digital manipulations amplify and accentuate this process.

In *A Theory of /Cloud/: Toward a History of Painting*, (2002) Hubert Damisch examines the function of the cloud in Western and Eastern painting, reading the cloud as not only a spatial signifier but also a sign that cannot be separated from its formal, psychological and spiritual associations. Li's long, horizontal light boxes suggest heavenly cloudscape combining several narratives from Korean and Japanese cloud painting. The hazy proliferation of cloud dissolves the visual hierarchy seen in traditional 'views of mists and clouds' – though Li's image is anchored by the tip of an aeroplane. Clouds have often provided an image of freedom from institutional or political constraint, but Li's cloudscape remains under the control of both the artist and technology, suggesting a quasi-scientific experiment in weather modification. With his digital stitching together of multiple cloud images from disparate geographies and time-zones, Li collapses space to create a new image. In Escape Velocity I and II, the apparently singular moment of a cloudscape forming across a sky is extended endlessly in time through post-production. Eventually the digitally enhanced cloudscape effect is rematerialised and given weight in the form of the light box.

The aerial view Li presents exists in the in-between of surface observation and satellite observation; it is also in-between countries, enabling the construction of fictional weathers. Up here, the atmosphere is thin and a speed of imagination is reached where the constraints of gravity no longer matter.

*Hoon Li's digital art practice spans Korea and New Zealand. He is currently completing his PhD at Elam School of Fine Arts in Auckland.*

*Julien Knebusch & Jérôme Knebusch*  
**Jérôme Knebusch, 2007**  
SAVED & LOST (2008)  
*mixed media, newspapers*

**Julien Knebusch** *Why did you collect weather reports from Le Monde?* **Jérôme Knebusch** I liked the idea of placing myself in the position of a weather forecast recorder. Recording the recorded. But collecting some-thing not really 'collectible', like the weather, is quite an absurd action. A collector likes differences between the similar. But weather is not similar, it changes constantly. So what can the forecast really tell? It is not the weather how it was, but the way we thought it would be – the tomorrow of yesterday. Some countries don't appear on the Le Monde map – the representation is typically Western European – and there are a lot of other discrepancies in the collection. Some maps are black and white, some outlines are missing, colours are inverted, and Vietnam is written at least in three different ways. Also, Le Monde has no Monday edition. But I like all these omissions, in some way it feels good to me that there is not one absolute overview. Trying to hold onto the weather at the same time as it disappears seems desperate – like the vertigo of approaching the world at planetary scale. I see the weather as a metaphor for everything difficult to hold. Like a thought, for example.

**Julien** *How has your collection evolved from the beginning to the present form of the project?* **Jérôme** I started the weather report collection without an idea for an exhibition, but the concept developed further from my conversations with Janine for the atmos exhibition. The work consists of almost every weather forecast from Le Monde from January 6 to December 29, 2007. No attempt was made to complete the missing editions. I tried to position myself as a 'normal weather being', meaning that I am not a specialist, I live in protected cities, and there are moments when the weather has no importance or simply does not exist. The missing forecasts are as important as the present ones. Each forecast has a short sentence as a title, pointing out the 'most important' weather details. I can imagine the work changing over a lifetime – and it will, as newspaper loses its colour quickly.

**Julien** *Why did you choose the 'whole Earth' weather map to cut out?*

**Jérôme** It seems to me that the paradox of weather is that we are physically forced to experience it locally – through the seasons, for example. But the weather itself does not move away, it is living at the planetary scale. In that way, we can only follow it through the weather report – but with all kinds of reductive representation methods more orientated toward spectacular changes or happenings, with little information about nuances. By thinking about the weather elsewhere in detail we may begin to lose our subjective approach.

**Julien** Do you think you belong to a local weather or climate?

**Jérôme** Well, I have never lived in another climate in its 'entirety'. When I do experience other climates, it is like weather tourism. And at home I never really look at the forecast. I guess I try to live with the weather how it is, like a present reinventing itself constantly.

*Artist Jérôme Knebusch practises between France and Germany. He is a graduate of the École Nationale Supérieure d'Art de Nancy, with a major in Typography.*

**Julien Knebusch** is a tutor and PhD researcher at University Paris III Sorbonne Nouvelle. He is the Leonardo/OLATS project manager for the 'Lovely Weather: Art and Climate' project. He is Jérôme's twin brother.

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**Cameron Robbins**  
SW COOL CHANGE – HOT, 95HRS, DOCK-LANDS (2008) and 12–14/03/08, 40°– COOL CHANGE, 50HRS, DOCKLANDS (2008)  
*ink drawings on paper*

Australian artist Cameron Robbins' ongoing wind drawing series offers traces of the wind's presence using a DIY-style Portable Wind Powered Drawing Machine. His mechanism includes a tripod-mounted wind-vane, an anemometer, bearings, drive belts and pulley wheels, guides, drawing wires, an ink pen and a drawing board. The works are literal facsimiles of the fluctuating movements of the wind. In physics terms they visualise the phase space of wind as it moves between x and y coordinates: wind speed drives the drawing arm and wind direction orientates the drawing board, hence the pen is compelled to draw rapidly in the direction the wind blows. In the case of Melbourne, a prevailing South-Easterly blows strongly and will then suddenly oscillate, leaving a dark string of repeated marks signifying that a 'cool change' is underway.

Like David Medalla's cloud-shape producing foam machines in the 1960s, Robbins' drawing machine simulates the dynamic machine that is the weather system, as gravity, wind currents and atmospheric pressure interact to produce an image. Robbins speculates that the key difference between his own interest in the dynamics of the wind and that of the physicist is his 'not needing to know' the result of the drawing when he sets up a blank page and gives free rein to the agency of the weather. The scientist tries to predict the outcome of the weather experiment, but Robbins relies completely on the process to reveal an outcome – even if it is a rain-drenched drawing.

Robbins has set up his drawing machines at numerous outdoor locations spreading from Melbourne's Docklands to a jetty shed on Port Phillip Bay's mouth at Queenscliffe, Victoria, and across the Nullarbor Plain to Western Australia. In the wind drawing the atmosphere becomes informational data that we re-live as our eyes trace the lines on the page. The drawings map a temporal process of weather flux and transition and provide a livelier rendition of a day's winds than a meteorologist's tabularisation.

*Cameron Robbins makes site-specific installations drawing on natural forces in art galleries, disused buildings and outdoor sites around Australia. He teaches sculpture at RMIT in Melbourne.*

*Cassandra Barnett*  
**Lisa Benson**  
FADE (2008)  
*Antique black and white photographic paper, and gathered light from artist's studio in Hamilton (2003-08) and MIC Gallery (for the duration of 'atmos')*

Last night before bed I read Lola the story of The Three Sillies. Today her eyes are all big and curious and she keeps quizzing me on the part about the moon, which goes like this:

Then the gentleman went on his travels again; and he came to a village, and outside the village there was a pond, and round the pond was a crowd of people. And they had got rakes, and brooms, and pitchforks reaching into the pond; and the gentleman asked what was the matter. 'Why,' they say, 'matter enough! Moon's tumbled into the pond, and we can't rake her out anyhow!' So the gentleman burst out a-laughing, and told them to look up into the sky, and that it was only the shadow in the water. But they wouldn't listen to him, and abused him shamefully, and he got away as quick as he could.

*But what if they could catch it?, Lola wants to know. How would they put it back? Would they hang it from a tree? Would they put it on a stick? Would they take turns holding it up? Would it burn their hands? Good question I think, wondering what Icarus would have to say about it. But Lola hasn't finished. Would they ever be able to throw it hard enough to get it back in the sky? How fragile is the moon anyway? Why not let it swim in the pond?*

Maybe one day I'll tell Lola about Daguerre and Niépce, the pioneers of photography. It wasn't enough, I'll explain, that they had learned to make shadow images of our illuminated world. They needed to arrest those images, to lift them out of time, pin them down with fixer and take permanent possession of the light's work. So fascinated were they with capturing what the light had done, they skated right over the living joy of actually seeing it take place. I wonder what Lola will make of them.

But for now, while she's worrying for the moon, I think I'll take her to watch a Lisa Benson drawing. Because you can't just look at Benson's evanescent drawings, you have to watch them, like you would a movie, like you would the sky on a day (or night) when time and light are so immense and immersive and intense that the need to hold onto anything just vaporises.

*New Zealand artist Lisa Benson uses diverse media to explore issues of temporality, light and the fragility of the art object. She teaches fine art at WINTEC in Hamilton.*

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As they map out connections between art, weather, science and temporality, these artists provoke us to ask questions such as: *How does weather mark time? How does the atmosphere get condensed or expanded in digital space?*

These artists embrace the dissipation and excess of environmental matter, but also the periods of stillness or waiting time that necessarily occur within a dynamic system.

When artists use weather as media their artwork they connect to a long history of human engagement with the weather as a beautiful, frustrating, sometimes frightening spectacle. The vapour produced by the respiration of the planet forms clouds, storms and also creative approaches.

By using weather as media for art production the artists in atmos suggest that the contingent nature of atmospheric conditions enables new sensory possibilities. Their many weathers may signal disorder – but it is a liberating and productive disorder.